



## COVID-19 pandemic highlights need for #HealthCare4All

TO: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health  
The Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship

CC: Premiers and Ministers of Health of all provinces & territories

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted long-standing gaps in the Canadian healthcare system that continue to disproportionately and negatively impact vulnerable communities. Despite Canada's proclaimed universal healthcare system, migrant workers, individuals without status, rejected refugee claimants, and others, are left uninsured, facing fear of deportation and insurmountable debt in accessing healthcare. Healthcare is a human right, yet it is not guaranteed for hundreds of thousands of individuals in Canada. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that our community wellbeing is highly interconnected, and we place our entire society at risk by failing to guarantee health care to all people. **As members of the health and migrant communities, we call on Canada's federal government to work closely with provincial and territorial governments, health institutions, and public health leaders to ensure and support access to healthcare for all people living in Canada, including those currently living in detention, regardless of immigration and citizenship status.**

In response to the pandemic, some provinces have begun acknowledging the harms of limiting access to healthcare for uninsured communities by temporarily expanding some types of coverage, largely through making an artificial distinction between COVID-19 related services and others (see <https://bit.ly/2WoRj5C>). This is not enough. There is significant variability in how COVID-19 presents, making it difficult for healthcare providers to know what constitutes a COVID-19 related service - this false distinction is harmful as it may lead to missed testing and treatment and increased community transmission. Full and comprehensive coverage of all services will also ease the administrative burden on frontline healthcare providers working to control this pandemic, rather than having them waste time with bureaucratic gatekeeping. **To effectively "flatten the curve", policy must ensure universal access to all essential health services.**

**The national response on this issue has also been fragmented, with only some provinces beginning to provide care for some uninsured individuals, and policy implementation being incomplete in healthcare institutions.** Patients are still being forced to navigate complicated pathways to access care, and many continue to be denied access to essential healthcare services, both COVID-19 related and otherwise. Uninsured individuals across Canada require universal access to healthcare that is effectively implemented from the level of policy to the patient experience - inconsistency only serves to create further inequity and confusion within an existing patchwork-system.

The threat of detention and deportation faced by undocumented individuals who seek essential healthcare services at all times, but particularly during this pandemic, must be addressed. Though deportation has been temporarily halted at the policy level, with some exceptions, there is an ongoing fear that access to health care services could result in detention and deportation by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in the future. This fear results in many uninsured individuals regularly avoiding or delaying seeking care. **It is important that health care institutions affirm in their patient privacy policies that they will not share information with the CBSA, and that the CBSA affirm that attempting to access healthcare will not result in detention or deportation.**

Finally, these changes have been announced as temporary measures for the COVID-19 crisis. This is in direct opposition to what healthcare professionals, international human rights bodies, and community organizations have repeatedly said: denying healthcare on the basis of immigration status is a human rights violation and threat to public health. Ensuring access to health care for migrants improves the health and safety for all communities in Canada; it leads to reduced health care costs and improved health outcomes. The United Nations Human Rights Committee has condemned Canada in the past for denying access to essential healthcare on the basis of immigration status, based on the case of Nell Toussaint. **We must not be short-sighted - equitable access to healthcare is always essential, not only during crises such as COVID-19.**

**We demand that the Canadian federal government work closely with provincial and territorial governments, health institutions, and public health leaders to immediately ensure comprehensive healthcare coverage to all.** This can only be achieved when:

1. Healthcare coverage is comprehensive, covering all medically-necessary services, and does not make the artificial and harmful distinction between COVID-19 related services and others;
2. All healthcare institutions are informed of the policy details and how they will be implemented, including coverage changes, the application of billing codes, and confidentiality policies that prevent sharing personal health information or collaborating with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA). This messaging must reach all workers interacting with patients in addition to healthcare providers;
3. An explicit public messaging campaign informing all uninsured communities and the broader public that all healthcare services are available at no charge regardless of immigration status;
4. The CBSA guarantees that accessing healthcare will not result in detention or deportation;
5. Healthcare coverage is permanent, carrying on beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, as a human rights and public health measure.

*This letter is endorsed by the undersigned.*

**MIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK**



CANADIAN DOCTORS FOR MEDICARE | MÉDECINS CANADIENS POUR LE RÉGIME PUBLIC



ASSOCIATION MÉDICALE CANADIENNE



CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



ONTARIO PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION



COLLABORATIVE NETWORK TO END EXPLOITATION



Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights



CANADIAN FEDERATION OF NURSES UNIONS LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS



CFMS FEMC Canadian Federation of Medical Students Fédération des étudiants et des étudiantes en médecine du Canada



Carrefour d'éducation populaire de Pointe St-Charles



mepacq



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES LIBERTES CIVILES



Health for All Now! People's Health Movement Canada



Conseil Migrant



**ACCÉSSS**  
Alliance des Communautés Culturelles pour  
l'Égalité dans la Santé et les Services Sociaux

**HEALTH  
PROVIDERS  
AGAINST  
POVERTY**



**PLANNED  
PARENTHOOD**  
Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre



**CENTRE DE PÉDIATRIE  
SOCIALE DE SAINT-LAURENT**  
*Au coeur de l'enfance*

MEMBRE DU RÉSEAU  
NOUVEAU  
BR JULEN



**DECENT WORK &  
HEALTH NETWORK**



Global Migration  
& Health Initiative

**MiGRANTE  
alberta**



**PHAS**  
Mouvement PHAS  
Personnes handicapées  
pour l'accès aux services



VANCOUVER & DISTRICT  
LABOUR COUNCIL

**#ahs4all**  
ALBERTA HEALTHCARE FOR ALL



**UNIFOR**  
theUnion | lesyndicat

**MRCC**  
Migrants Resource Centre Canada



**ASSOCIATION POUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DU PERSONNEL DOMESTIQUE/ADDPD**  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE RIGHTS OF HOUSEHOLD WORKERS/ARHW

**COCQ-SIDA**  
COALITION DES ORGANISMES COMMUNAUTAIRES  
QUÉBÉCOIS DE LUTTE CONTRE LE SIDA  
Membre de la Coalition Internationale Sida



**TCRI**

Table de concertation  
des organismes au service  
des personnes réfugiées  
et immigrantes

40 ans



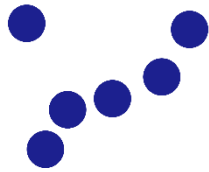
**CUPE-SCFP**



RÉSEAU DES  
TABLES RÉGIONALES  
DE GROUPES DE FEMMES  
DU QUÉBEC



The Coalition Against More Surveillance



**OMSA**  
Ontario Medical  
Students Association

**AÉMO**  
Association des étudi-  
de médecine de l'Ont

**IAVGO**  
Community Legal  
Clinic

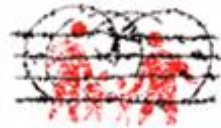


WOMEN'S HEALTH  
IN WOMEN'S HANDS  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE  
INCREASE • INNOVATE • IGNITE

**SALCO**  
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario



**canadian centre  
on statelessness**



Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés  
Canadian Council for Refugees



**OCASI**  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants



LE CENTRE DE RÉFUGIÉ  
THE REFUGEE CENTRE

**CASSIA**  
COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS



**LDL**

Ligue des  
droits et libertés



Regroupement des Aidante  
et Aidants Naturels  
de Montréal

# UNA SINGA

United Nurses of Alberta

# MIGRANT WORKERS

Alliance for Change

QUÉBEC



**firstcall**  
BC CHILD AND YOUTH  
ADVOCACY COALITION



Moelle épinière  
et motricité Québec

Réinventer l'autonomie



Alliance for Healthier Communities  
Alliance pour des communautés en santé



**MIGRANTE**  
**ONTARIO**



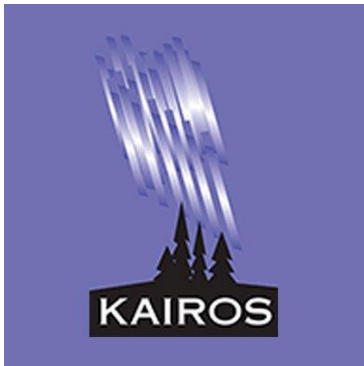
AGIDD-SMQ

ASSOCIATION DES GROUPES D'INTERVENTION  
EN DÉFENSE DES DROITS EN SANTÉ MENTALE  
DU QUÉBEC

**KEEPING  
SIX  
HAMILTON**

**TOMS**

TABLE DES ORGANISMES COMMUNAUTAIR  
MONTREALAIS DE LUTTE CONTRE LE SIDA



**SENIORS  
CENTRE  
SOCIETY**



**CENTRE ON  
DRUG POLICY  
EVALUATION**

Formerly the International Centre for Science in Drug Policy



SERVICE JÉSUIE DES RÉFUGIÉS  
CANADA



**Refuge**  
Hamilton Centre  
for **Newcomer Health**



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES  
CENTRES DE SANTE COMMUNAUTAIRE



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES



**NORTHERN  
CONNECTIONS**



**SAISIA**  
Saskatchewan Association of  
Immigrant Settlement and  
Integration Agencies



**KAIROS**  
BC-Yukon



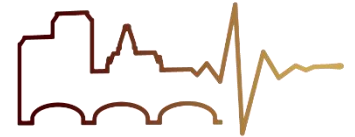
La Coalition des Tables Régionales  
d'Organismes Communautaires



Alliance du personnel  
professionnel et technique  
de la santé et des services sociaux



OXFORD COALITION  
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



**SWITCH**

STUDENT WELLNESS INITIATIVE  
TOWARD COMMUNITY HEALTH



**Street CCRED**



**APUO**

ASSOCIATION DES PROFESSEUR(E)S DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

**BCHealth  
Coalition**



edlc.ca @EdmLabour

**PIVOT**

LEGAL SOCIETY



Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op



**IWC**  
IMMIGRANT  
WORKERS CENTER



**Criminalization and  
Punishment  
Education  
Project**



Shelter  
**Health  
Network**



**La Table**



*des regroupements provinciaux  
d'organismes communautaires et bénévoles*



**OCTEVAW - COCVFF**  
END VIOLENCE



CENTRE DE SANTÉ COMMUNAUTAIRE  
**PINECREST-QUEENSWAY**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE





**Chatham-Kent  
Community Health Centres**  
Centres de santé communautaire de  
Chatham-Kent

**Halifax  
Refugee Clinic**



**Asociación de  
Mexicanos**  
EN CALGARY



**The  
Obstetric  
Justice Project**  
Canada



**fSSS** CSN



**RAINBOW  
REFUGEE**



**CAWI-IVTF**  
City for All Women Initiative  
Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes

**Hope Centre  
Health Care Inc.**



**MWP**  
MILLENNIAL WOMXN IN POLICY



**DIVERSEcity**  
community resources society



**RAINBOW  
REFUGEE**



**Hamilton Community Legal Clinic**  
Clinique juridique communautaire de Hamilton

**VANCOUVER**



**Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres**



**WellFort**



**Seaway Valley  
Community Health Centre**

*Working with you for a Healthier Community*

**MOUVEMENT  
SANTÉ MENTALE  
QUÉBEC**



Promouvoir. Soutenir. Outiller.



**House of  
Friendship**



**CAOT-ACE**

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists  
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes



**London  
InterCommunity  
Health Centre**





Les Oblates Franciscaines  
de Saint-Joseph



Immigration  
Partnership  
Winnipeg



**Ontario**  
**Health Coalition**  
Protecting public healthcare for all.



**Cabinet Laval**  
Avocats en immigration



**JMPSP**

Jeunes médecins pour  
la santé publique



**SERY**  
SOLIDARITÉ ETHNIQUE RÉGIONALE  
DE LA YAMASKA



Comité  
d'aide  
aux  
réfugiés



Centre **multiethnique**  
de Québec

**AQAADI**



**CENTRE FRANCOPHONE  
DU GRAND TORONTO**

Accredited by  
Canadian Centre  
for Accreditation



Agreed par  
Centre canadien  
de l'agrément



Association québécoise  
des organismes de  
coopération internationale



Pediatric Chairs of Canada  
Directeurs de pédiatrie du Canada



*Pour l'ouverture à l'autre*



Children's  
Healthcare  
Canada

Santé  
des enfants  
Canada



College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)  
Medical Student Society of McGill University  
Migrant Workers Alliance - Niagara  
FIQ Syndicat des professionnelles en soins de Montérégie Ouest  
MCC Toronto's LGBTQ+ Refugee Programs  
Ometz: Community Services, Employment, and Immigration  
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2424  
Service d'accueil des nouveaux arrivants de La Matanie (SANAM)  
Concertation itinérance Beauharnois-Salaberry Suroit  
PEI Working Group for a Livable Income  
Centre ressources pour femmes de Beauport  
International Retinoblastoma Consortium  
Micah House Refugee Reception  
Rainbow New Beginnings  
Action santé Outaouais en partenariat avec la Table de développement social de la Vallée de la Gatineau  
WazanaLaw  
La Maisonnée  
Casa C.A.F.I. (Centre d'aide aux familles Immigrantes)  
Northumberland Community Legal Centre  
East End Community Health Centre  
Judy Waldman Counselling and Consulting  
Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie  
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loretto Sisters, Canada)  
RÉCIFS (Regroupement de personnes qui exercent la profession d'intervenantes sociales au Québec)  
Kenora Seniors Coalition  
Quaker Refugee Committee of Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends  
Regency Nannies Inc.